

Information provided by Peter Lower (The Wild Gardiner) in cooperation with The Asheville Tree Commission

Is There a Walnut in Your Future?

Walnuts are fantastic trees able to protect their territory by releasing a potent chemical that seeps into the surrounding soil and prevents many other plants from establishing a roothold. The active principle is juglin or juglon hence the scientific name of Juglans.

There are a number of species in the clan but the most important are the native North American tree, the black walnut (Juglans nigra), the Arizona walnut (J. major), and the magnificent Persian walnut (J. regia).

Kashmir is a fruitful place where, according to historians and horticulturists, the Persian walnut inhabits the mountain slopes at an elevation of 4,000 to 7,000 feet. And that walnut is just one of hundreds of tree species, not to mention plants in general.

It is said that the Golden Age of Earth, men lived on acorns and the gods lived on walnuts. According to Pliny, the Persian walnut was introduced into Italy long before the birth of Christ. The Dutch call it walnoot and the Romans called it Jupiter's nuts.

But walnuts in general are great and noble trees. In England one walnut tree could be worth 600 pounds and that was at a time when a person could live well on a few pounds a week.

And I didn't know until reading Mrs. Maud Grieve's book, "A Modern Herbal" that the oil yielded by the kernel of the fruit (not the part that's eaten), is used to polish the wood. Not congealing by cold, it's found to be especially valuable for varnish and applying gilt to frames and moldings.

The unripe fruit is said to make a great pickle and I do remember seeing jars of pickled walnuts but found them to be (at least for me), not on the level of peanuts, which aren't nuts at all.

Finally, herbalist made a gargle from for inflamed throats from green husks boiled in honey but that sounds just a bit too much for me.

Walnut Trees and Compatible Plants

A few months ago on WCQS, our roundtable received a phone call about plants that are impervious to the threat of death presented by walnuts to many members of the plant world. Seems more than the average number of gardeners had old black walnut trees on their properties and while having problems raising other species in the trees' vicinity, wanted to keep the walnuts.

The following are various perennials, annuals, trees, vines, and shrubs that are not intimidated by juglans, the poison produced by walnut trees.

Perennials include *Ajuga reptans*, bugleweed; *Alcea rosea*, hollyhock; *Asarum europaeum*, European wild ginger; *Astilbe* spp.; *Campanula latifolia*, bellflower; *Chrysanthemum* spp., hardy chrysanthemum; *Doronicum* spp., leopard's bane; *Dryopteris cristata*, crested wood fern; *Galium odoratum*, sweet woodruff; *Geranium robertianum*, herb Robert; *Geranium sanguineum*, cranesbill; *Hemerocallis fulva*, common daylily; *Hieracium aurantiacum*, orange hawkweed; *Helianthus tuberosus*, Jerusalem artichoke; *Heuchera x brizoides* 'Pluie de Feu', coral bells; and to round out the "H's" here's a number of hostas, including: *Hosta fortunei* 'Glaucua', *H. lancifolia*, *H. marginata*, *H. undulata* 'Variegata', and *Hydrophyllum virginianum*, Virginia waterleaf.

---*Iris sibirica*, Siberian iris; *Monarda didyma*, bee balm; *Monarda fistulosa*, wild bergamot; *Oenothera fruiticosa*, sundrops; *Onoclea sensibilis*, sensitive fern; *Osmunda cinnamomea*, cinnamon fern, *Phlox paniculata*, summer phlox; *Polemonium reptans*, Jacob's ladder; *Polygonatum commutatum*, great Solomon's seal; *Primula x polyantha* polyanthus primrose; *Pulmonaria* spp., lungwort; *Sanguinaria Canadensis*, bloodroot; *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Mulitplex', double-flowered bloodroot; *Sedum acre*, gold moss; *Sedum spectabile*, sedum; *Stachys byzantina*, lamb's ear; *Tradescantia virginiana*, spiderwort; *Trillium cernuum*, nodding trillium; *Trillium grandiflorum*, great white trillium; *Uvularia grandiflora*, great merrybells; *Viola Canadensis*, Canada violet; and *V. sororia*, woolly blue violet (and note that under a walnut, the Canada violet is almost as much of a thug as it is elsewhere in the garden). Allow me to add to this section, two vines, *Clematis* spp. 'Red Cardinal' and *Parthenocissus quinquefolia*, Virginia creeper.

---As to bulbs, there are: *Chionodoxa luciliae*, glory-of-the-snow; *Endymion hispanicus*, Spanish bluebell; *Galanthus nivalis*, snowdrops; *Muscari botryoides*, grape hyacinth; <NARCISSUS< I>'Cheerfulness', 'February Gold', *N. 'Geranium'*, *N. 'Sundial'*, *N. 'Tete a tete'*, and *N. 'Yellow Cheerfulness'*; *Tulipa* spp., Darwin 'White Volcano', *T. spp.*, parrot 'Blue Parrot', *T. Gregii* 'Toronto'; all of the crocuses (*Crocus* spp.); *Eranthis hyemalis*, winter aconite; and *Scilla siberica*, blue squill.

---There are a number of shrubs, including *Daphne mezereum*, February daphne; *Forsythia suspense*, weeping forsythia; *Hibiscus syriacus*, Rose of Sharon; *Lonicera tatarica*, Tatarian honeysuckle; and the following rhododendrons *Rhododendron periclymenoides*, pinxterbloom, *R. spp.*, Exbury 'Gibraltar', and *R. spp.*, Exbury 'Balzac'.

---The trees include: *Acer palmatum*, Japanese maple; *A. palmatum* 'Dissectum', cut-leaf Japanese maple; *Tsuga Canadensis*, Canadian hemlock.

---Finally, for those gardeners in a hurry, here are a few annuals: *Begonia* spp., fibrous cultivars and *B. 'Nonstop'*, a tuberous begonia; and *Ipomoea* spp., 'Heavenly Blue'.